



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

that God himself is greatly interested in honoring his Word. It ought to be well understood that the Word of God is not honored when untruth is told about it, or when the plain truth about it is denied or concealed. And we cannot easily believe that God is well pleased when methods like these are resorted to in commending it to men.

It is not necessary to expend much effort in convincing the "plain man" that the Bible is not infallible. He knows that pretty well already. There are, as I have said, millions of the very ignorant and fanatical to whom no

theory about it will be credible which is not tinged with magic. But the "plain man" is the key of the situation; it is with him that we must learn to deal. And he does not need to be told what the Bible is not; but he does need to be told what it is. He is quite capable of understanding the truth about it, and of being convinced of its great value to him. And it is highly important, at this juncture, that the men who are called to the leadership of thought in our Protestant churches should see to it that the "plain man" is given a view of the Bible which will convince his reason and satisfy his moral sense.

THE CHURCH AND THE "COMMUNITY CENTER"

ARTHUR E. HOLT, PH.D.
Manhattan, Kansas

Dr. Holt is no mere theorizer on the important matter he here discusses. For several years he has been a student and lecturer on the work of the rural church and his opinions, whether one agrees with them or not, are worthy of most serious attention.

To a student of modern rural life nothing is more interesting than the itching of some four or five rural institutions to become the accepted "community center" of the reorganized rural community. One need not attend very many meetings of social organizations, public-school associations, or religious organizations without detecting a more or less conscious desire to be center in the new rural community. Among these champions of various types is a strong

and respectable group who would make the church perform this function. Their slogan is sometimes stated, "nothing happening without the church." The church is to be the center around which all the work of the community organizes. There is very little the minister ought not to know. He should be expert farm adviser, superintendent of playgrounds, promoter of community health, leader in community marketing, as well as preacher and director of religious

education inside his church. All this follows logically if the church is to become the community center. The chief obstacle in the realization of this program is of course the denominational one, and in consequence there is a perpetual roar of protest against denominations in the rural community. The denomination is organized from a center outside the community and of course most effectively blocks any attempt at making the local church a community center.

Now the thesis of this article, briefly stated, is that the sooner the Protestant churches lose their anxiety to be community centers the sooner will they begin to serve the community in accordance with the true genius of the church. It is a devitalizing ambition and shows itself in several forms of weakness. If the Protestant church is to become a community center, it must strike a level with the community, which will rob it of its own certainty and prophetic power. *A community program for a church is good; a community platform is bad.*

The community center must be located with reference to the community. The church centers in a stream of spiritual and social life entirely outside that community and is in that community to speak in terms of a life that the community cannot of itself produce. It serves by being imperialistic. The church cannot ultimately be a social center because it must often divide the community. A great many people have the very queer notion that if the credal differences were dropped the whole community would naturally flow together into one channel and that

religious. But a program of social righteousness and personal purity will draw lines sufficiently distinct in any community to keep that community from being *centered* around the organization which draws these lines. Is the church never again to bring a sword to the rural community? The ideal is nearer to the Catholic theory than it is to that of the Protestant; for the Catholic believes that the church should absorb the community with all its activities, whereas the Protestant thinks of the church as a leavening and criticizing force inside the community life.

It seems petty to criticize those who wish to make the church a community center, because their efforts grow out of an attempt to be loyal to the church and to relate the church to the community. Their efforts would be more successful if they would discriminate between a church with a community platform and a church with a *Christian platform* and a *community program*. The church gets its platform from God through Jesus; it ought to have a community program but not a community platform. The Christian doctrine of service is not to be interpreted in a way which makes Christianity less christocentric. If an organization which accepts Jesus as Lord and Master can organize the activities of the community, let us be glad that life can organize on such a high plane and let it be forever an ideal that Christian principles shall prevail in all the activities of the community. But the church will best accomplish this, not by striking an average of the community like an entertainment association or a lecture platform, but by keeping itself free to criti-

cize and to praise in the name of a type of life which claimed a worth so supreme that it could say half of the community shall be taken and the other half left.

All this is not in any way to be interpreted as a criticism of the attempt to give to the rural community more tangible form and to locate a center. There is an imperative need of this. Such organizations as the neighborhood improvement associations and kindred organizations which are nation-wide in their development will accomplish this task. The church which must moralize and idealize that community in terms of the kingdom of God on earth needs to have that community defined and to a certain extent created. At present in too many places the church lacks an organic life in which it can function. Here the minister should be quick to help start organizations which can create an outward form for the community, but the church must reserve for itself the task of idealizing that community and energizing its inner life. Other organizations will function inside this neighborhood organization. The school will make its contribution, the social club will make its contribution. All will function as free institutions

inside an organic life which will best be served by a free church. And as a corollary of this view it might be mentioned that many communities can stand two churches even as they can stand two political parties and two grocery stores and two doctors, and be none the poorer, provided the churches and the grocery stores have a community program. It could even be maintained, I think, that as a community is all the better if it has a progressive and conservative political party it may be all the better if it has two churches, one a conservative and the other a progressive. At least the right of a church to exist is determined by the quality of its message and the need of the community for the message. The task of the church is to radiate moral and spiritual energy. Only occasionally will the church be popular enough to secure a majority vote. For a church which is leavening the community to withdraw just because there is another church may sometimes be treachery to the community. The community needs a moral and spiritual Lord more than it needs a social center. They are not to be identified. The church should know which it is to furnish.